

REMARKS

This amendment is submitted in full response to the outstanding Office Action of September 29, 1999 on the merits of the above-identified case. In the outstanding Office Action, claims 1-2, 7-9, and 26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 as being anticipated by Gradin (U.S. Patent No. 4,639,106), and claims 1-11, 14-18, and 20-26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over Winner (U.S. Patent No. 5,438,780) in view of O'Brian (U.S. Patent No. 5,292,169) and over Cheng (U.S. Patent No. 5,653,278) in view of Locher (U.S. Patent No. 4,790,598). The Examiner has, however, indicated that claims 12-13 and 19 are merely objected to, but contain allowable subject matter.

Accordingly, merely so as to expedite formal allowance of the allowable claims, and without consideration of the merits of the Examiner's substantive rejections as to the original pending claims, some original claims have been canceled and independent claims 1 and 26 have been amended, as recited above, so as to contain the allowable subject matter of now cancelled dependent claim 12. Specifically, the subject matter of allowable claim 12 has been added to original independent claims 1 and 26. Accordingly, amended claims 1 and 26, as well as the remaining original claims are, therefore, now believed to be in allowable form.

In addition to the above amendments, the term substantially

has been removed from the pending claims. This amendment is done, however, without prejudice to the claim's ability to encompass a range of equivalents beyond the literal meaning of the previously modified terms.

Accordingly, based on the above remarks and the contents of the references of record, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider his position. Since nowhere in the art is this new, novel and not obvious combination to be found, taught, or suggested, it is urged that this case is now clearly in condition for allowance and, accordingly, the same is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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